News release

Yellow dust mystery

9 May 2006

The Met Office have been receiving calls about a mysterious yellow dust appearing on cars and windows across various parts of the UK, especially along the east coast.

The new generation of satellites are producing images (right) that show a large plume of 'dust' being blown from the east. This coincides with reports of high levels of pollen in Europe and also a large number of seasonal fires across the fields of western Russia over recent days. Could this explain the mystery?

Satellite image courtesy of EUMETSAT

It would appear that the smoke has a part to play, but Sunday 7 May 2006 was a dreadful day for people in Denmark allergic to birch pollen. New record counts were recorded at both of the country's reporting stations, beating the existing high count recorded in 1993. The Danish Meteorological Institute and the Danish Asthma and Allergic Society have been recording pollen count in Copenhagen since 1977.

The explosion of birch pollen in Denmark this year has been caused by near-perfect weather conditions over the last few weeks. A late start to the pollen season, a wet April, followed by a warm, sunny early May have combined to see birch catkins releasing an enormous amount of pollen grains over just a few days.

For further information about the affects of pollen see the National Pollen and Aerobiology Research Unit.

Notes to editors:
The record birch pollen count recorded in Denmark 7 May 2006 was 4,381 per cubic metre. The previous record was 3,899 per cubic metre.

For further information:
Met Office Press Office +44 (0)1392 886655
E-mail: pressoffice@metoffice.gov.uk

Met Office Customer Centre 0870 900 0100
If you're outside the UK +44 (0)1392 885680

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